



Parent Involvement

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Getting Parents Involved

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Easy Ways to Get Parents Involved:

- ✓ Have a yearly social for the parents
- ✓ Have parents "show & tell" about their jobs
- ✓ Create an after-school handbook for parents
- ✓ Offer computer, parenting, and/or GED classes
- ✓ Have a talent show with parents as the participants
- ✓ Have family game night
- ✓ Send home a monthly parent bulletin
- ✓ Have a homework help session for parents
- ✓ Allow the parents to be the after-school participants for a day

When parents are involved in their children's education, both children and parents are likely to benefit. But what does parent involvement in after-school programs really mean?

Traditionally, parent involvement has been defined as parents taking the responsibility for supporting their children's education by making sure their children are attending school, arriving ready to learn, and receiving help with their homework. More recently, parent involvement has called for the more active participation of parents, encouraging them to become active in school events such as parent-teacher conferences or home and school associations. Researchers report that parent participation in their children's schooling frequently

- enhances children's self-esteem,
- improves children's academic achievement,
- improves parent-child relationships, and
- helps parents develop positive attitudes towards school and a better understanding of the schooling process.

Despite these advantages, most after-school staff experience the frustration of trying to involve parents and getting little response. They complain that parents do not come to conferences, check homework, or answer notes. This lack of involvement leads some to conclude that parents do not care about their children's education. However, most parents care a great deal. This caring, though, is not always evidenced by attendance at school events.

There are a number of reasons why parents may not become involved, and



teachers should consider these factors before dismissing parents as uninterested.

For many parents, a major impediment to becoming involved is the lack of time. Working parents are often unable to attend school events during the day, and evenings are the only time these parents have to spend with their children. As a result, they may choose to spend time with their family rather than attend meetings at school.

For other parents a visit to school is an uncomfortable experience, perhaps a holdover from their own school days. And, for others, the availability and cost of babysitters restrict their involvement in their children's after-school program.

Some after-school programs make special efforts to reach parents who do not usually participate in their children's education. Such programs provide flexible scheduling for events and parent-teacher conferences, inform parents through phone calls or newsletters about what their children are learning, and provide parents assistance in creating a supportive learning environment for their children at home.

Whatever the strategy, it is important for teachers to keep the lines of communication open. A teacher usually calls a parent to report a child's

inappropriate behavior or academic failure. But teachers should use phone calls to let parents know about their children's positive behavior and to get input. Creating an after-school atmosphere that is inviting is one of the most effective ways to get more parents involved. While it is possible for a teacher to implement a parent involvement program alone, it will be more successful if all stakeholders participate.

The African Proverb says, "It takes a village to raise a child." As it relates to an after-school program, the village is composed of the parents, after-school staff, school administrators, and community partners. When everyone is involved, everyone benefits.



Benefits of Parent Involvement

Students

- ◆ Higher grades and test scores
- ◆ Better school attendance
- ◆ Lower rates of suspension
- ◆ Decrease use of drugs and alcohol
- ◆ Fewer instances of violent behavior

Teachers

- ◆ Improved morale
- ◆ Improved teaching effectiveness
- ◆ Increased job satisfaction
- ◆ Improved communication/relations with students, parents, and community
- ◆ Increased community support of after-school

Parents

- ◆ Improved communication/relations with children and teachers
- ◆ Improved self-esteem
- ◆ Increased education level or skills
- ◆ Improved decision-making skills
- ◆ Improved attitude toward school and school staff

National PTA



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